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Australian Bureau of Statistics
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Births

NAME OF ORGANISATION
Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS)

OVERVIEW

The responsibility for registration of births in Australia lies with individual state and territory Registrars of Births, Deaths and Marriages. A Birth Registration Statement is completed by at least one of the parents of a baby. This information is the basis of the data provided to the Australian Bureau of Statistic (ABS) for processing and production of birth statistics. The Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) is the central statistical authority for the Australian Government and, under the Government-to-Government arrangements entered into with the states pursuant to the Statistics (Arrangements with States) Act 1956, provides statistical services for state and territory governments.

Births data is supplied to the ABS, on a monthly basis and in electronic format, from each of the Registrars. Processing of this data is carried out by the Health and Vitals Statistics Unit (HVSU), located in the Queensland Office of the ABS. The systems used to collect and process the data are constantly being reviewed and developed in order to make the most effective use of technology.

PURPOSE

ABS birth statistics are based on events registered in respective jurisdictions, with information provided by the state and territory Registrars of Births, Death and Marriages (RBDM). Australian birth statistics a component in the production of quarterly estimates

of natural increase as a component of population change in the calculation of population estimates. Birth statistics are also used in the analysis of fertility in Australia. Trends in fertility are used in the development of assumptions on future levels of fertility and mortality for population projections. The primary uses of Australian population estimates are in the determination of seats in the House of Representatives for each state and territory, as well as in distribution of Australian Government funds to state, territory and local governments. Population estimates are also used for a wide range of government, business and community decisions, both directly and indirectly, by contributing to a range of other social and economic indicators.

SCOPE

Scope and Coverage

The implementation of new scope rules occurred with respect of the 2007 data.

Ideally, for compiling annual time series, the number of events (births) should be recorded and reported as all those occurring within a given reference period such as a calendar year. However, due to lags in registration of events and the provision of that information to the ABS, this ideal is unlikely to be met under the current legislation and Registration business processes. As the actual vital event being accounted for is usually the addition of the event on a State/Territory register of deaths, the occurrence event is being approximated by the event being registered. Also, some additions to the register can be delayed in being received by the ABS from the Registrar (processing or data transfer lags).

In effect there are 3 dates attributable to each birth registration:
· The date of occurrence (of the birth),
· The date of registration or inclusion on the State/Territory register
· The month in which the registered event is lodged with the ABS.

Up to and including the 2006 reference year, the following business rules were used by the ABS to determine the scope of the births collection for any given reference year:
The scope of the collection is all births registered in Australia for the reference year, two years prior to the current year and the first quarter of the subsequent year. As an example: records received by the ABS during the March quarter of 2007 which were initially registered in 2006 (but not fully completed until 2007) are assigned to the 2006 processing year. Any registrations relating to 2006 which are received by the ABS after the end of the March quarter are assigned to the 2007 processing year.

Under the previous scope rule it was possible for registrations to not be recorded at all within the total historical record of all deaths which have occurred. For the purposes of this explanation, the reference year Y refers to the calendar year ending 31 December

From the 2007 reference year, the following business rules are used to determine the scope of the birth collection for any given reference year.

Births for a reference year Y comprises those events:

· added to the register in reference year Y (i.e. date of registration falls within 12 months comprising Y), and provided to the ABS in the monthly files received from the Registrar in the reference year Y or the 3 months ending 31 March of the year following the reference year Y; and
· added to the register in reference year Y-n (i.e. date of registration falls earlier than 1 January in reference year Y) and is received by the ABS in the monthly files received from the Registrar in reference year Y or the 3 months ending 31 March of the year following the reference year Y and has not been included in any statistics reported for earlier periods.

Births include:

1. All births that were live born and were not previously registered.

2. Births to temporary visitors to Australia (including visitors from Norfolk Island).

3. Births that occurred within Australian Territorial waters.

4. Births that occurred in Australian Antarctic Territories and other external territories.

5. Births occurred on Norfolk Island from 1 July 2016 are included. This is due to the introduction of the Norfolk Island Legislation Amendment Act 2015. Norfolk Island births are included in statistics for 'Other Territories' as well as totals for all of Australia. Births occurring on Norfolk Island prior to 1 July 2016 are not in scope for birth statistics.

6. Births that occurred in transit (i.e. on ships or planes) if registered in the Australian state or territory of 'next port of call'.

7. Births to Australian nationals employed overseas at Australian legations and consular offices (i.e. children born overseas to Australian diplomats or their families).

8. Births that occurred in earlier years that have not been previously registered (late registrations).

Births exclude:
1. Still births/ foetal deaths (these are accounted for in perinatal death statistics published in Causes of Death, Australia (cat. no. 3303.0), and previously, Perinatal Deaths, Australia (cat. no. 3304.0));

2. Adoptions, sex changes, legitimations and corrections.

3. Births to foreign diplomatic staff.

Registration of births are collected by the registry in each state and territory. There exists a national legislative requirement that all births be registered by the parents within 60 days of occurrence. Hospitals, doctors and midwives have responsibility for providing Birth Registration Statements (BRS) to the parents. As responsibility for registration lies with the parents of the child, the Registry must wait for the parents to submit the BRS before they can add the birth record to their database. It is well known that there can be

a lag between occurrence and registration, which can often be longer than the 60 day window specified in the legislative Act.

Additionally, records flagged as containing missing or incorrect information are not registered or provided to the ABS until the registry follow up with the parents and sufficiently complete the BRS. The lag between occurrence and registration can also be influenced by registry processing irregularities and backlogs. However, given that the responsibility for registration rests with the parents, the problem to a large extent is beyond the control of the ABS and the Registry.

DATA DETAIL

Conceptual framework

The collection, processing, compilation and dissemination of birth statistics is the joint responsibility of various stakeholders. The responsibility for registration of births and deaths in Australia lies with individual state and territory Registrars of Birth, Death and Marriage (RBDMs). Each state and territory has its own legislation covering the birth and death registration process, as well as the role and responsibilities of the RBDMs.

RBDMs supply Birth Registration Statements (BRS) to hospitals and birth clinics for distribution to parents. Parents have a legislative requirement to register a birth within 60 days, with the onus on the parents to submit a completed BRS to the Registry. The RBDM is responsible for processing the form and forwarding data to the ABS. The BRS is different in each state and territory, with different questions being asked of the parents. In addition, hospitals, birth clinics, midwives and doctors are responsible for notifying the RBDMs of all occurrences of births (including still-births). These records are later linked to the parent-completed BRS and used for following up outstanding BRS forms.

RBDMs supply information from the BRS to the ABS for coding (for example, geography, multiple births, marital status and birthplace), compilation, analysis and dissemination.

Births are a components of population growth. See Demographic Estimates and Projections: Concepts, Sources and Methods, Statistical Concepts Library on the ABS website

Main outputs

Preliminary counts by state of usual residence are provided quarterly for population estimates.

Main output is annual data. Variables include:
· Sex, Month of Occurrence, Month of Registration, Nuptiality, Plurality, Indigenous status
· Mother's Details - Age, Usual Residence, Previous issue, Country of Birth
· Father's Details - Age, Usual Residence, Country of Birth.

Classifications

Australian Statistical Geography Standard (ASGS) for Usual Residence
Standard Australian Classification of Countries (SACC) for Country of Birth

Other concepts (summary)

Age specific birth rate
Crude birth rates
Gross reproduction rates
Net reproduction rate
Total fertility rate
Estimated resident population

GEOGRAPHIC DETAIL
Australia
New South Wales
Victoria
Queensland
South Australia
Western Australia
Tasmania
Northern Territory
ACT
Other (specify below)

Comments and/or Other Regions

Australia
New South Wales
Victoria
Queensland
South Australia
Western Australia
Tasmania
Northern Territory
ACT
Greater Capital City Statistical Areas (GCCSA)
Rest of State
Statistical Area Level 4 (SA4)
Statistical Area Level 3 (SA3)
Statistical Area Level 2 (SA2)
Local Governments Areas
Remoteness Areas

COLLECTION FREQUENCY
Annually

Frequency comments
Information is collected from the relevant Registrar(s) of Births, Deaths and Marriages in each state and territory on a monthly basis.

COLLECTION HISTORY

The collection of births statistics in Australia dates back to 1839, when the first civil registration of births (as well as deaths and marriages) was enforced in Tasmania. Collected initially for purely administrative reasons, over the years the data became a valuable source of statistical information. The Australian Bureau of Statistics - ABS (formerly the Commonwealth Bureau of Census and Statistics) has had responsibility to produce population estimates since its establishment, and Births statistics has been an integral part of this process. State and National birth data date back to at least 1860, while birth data are available in electronic form from 1975, inclusive. Each State/Territory office of ABS was responsible for the collection and processing of Births data registered with that State/Territory up until 1996, when this function was centralised in the Queensland Office of ABS.

DATA AVAILABILITY

Yes

Data availability comments

Electronic data available from 1975

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